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Bhadraaka Sutta

The Discourse to Bhadraka | S 42.11

Theme: How to know the noble truths of true reality

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2019

1 Summary, significance, reconstruction

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARY

1.1.1 The Bhadraka Sutta (S 42.11) is a short teaching on how **suffering** arises when we are attached to other people. This is true at any time: that suffering is rooted in desire and passion.

1.1.2 The Bhadraka Sutta preserves a short dialogue between the Buddha and the headman Bhadraka, who asks about the arising and passing away of suffering, to which the Buddha gives a very practical answer [§1-7]. The Buddha begins his teaching by pointing out to Bhadraka how we suffer on account of the misfortunes of those whom we care about, but are unaffected by the misfortunes of others [§§8-12].

The reason we suffer is because we have **desire and passion** for others [§§11-12]. This truth *applied* in the past, and *will apply* in the future. [§13]. Bhadraka agrees [§14], and affirms that he suffers, as such, by way of caring about his son [§§16-17] and his wife [§18-20]. The Buddha concludes by restating the teaching that **all suffering is rooted in desire**. This is called “samsaric suffering.”

1.2 RECONSTRUCTED PASSAGES

1.2.1 Omission (Be and Ee)

Both Be and Ee only has §14.2 but omit §§14.3+4. §14.2 (spoken by Bhadraka) reads:

14.2 “Whatever suffering arises, [329] **all that is rooted in desire**, has desire as its source; for, desire is the root of suffering.”

Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati sabbaṃ taṃ chanda,mūlakam chanda,nidānaṃ chandi hi mūlam dukkhassāti.

Note here that Bhadraka has paraphrased the Buddha’s specific statements on when and how suffering arises. In §17, the Buddha himself quotes this sentence made by Bhadraka, making the generalization himself. This is, in fact, the **sutta thesis**, the essence of the Sutta teaching, which, significantly, closes the Sutta, too [§21].

1.2.2 Reconstruction (Se)

As a rule, the protagonist (the recipient of Dharma-teaching) will repeat, in full, the key passages of what has been taught to him. This is, in fact, reported in the Siamese edition of **the Bhadraka Sutta**:

14.3 Whatever suffering that arose in **the past**, **all that is rooted in desire**, has desire as its source; for, desire is the root of suffering.

Yankiñci atītam addhānaṃ dukkhaṃ uppajjamānaṃ uppajji sabbaṃ taṃ chanda,mūlakam chanda,nidānaṃ chando hi mūlam dukkhassāti.

14.4 Whatever suffering that will arise in **the future**, **all that is rooted in desire**, has desire as its source; for, desire is the root of suffering.

*Yaṅkiñci anāgatam addhānaṃ dukkhaṃ uppajjamānaṃ uppajjissati sabbantaṃ chanda,-
mūlakaṃ chanda,nidānaṃ chando hi mūlaṃ dukkhassāti*

Both the Burmese edition (Be) and the PTS edition (Ee) omit §14.3; but it occurs in the Sinhala edition (Ce) and **the Siamese edition** (Se:SR). With the help of the Siamese edition, we are thus able to faithfully reconstruct the passage in translation.¹

Be Ee and Ce omit §14.4, which is found only in the Siamese edition (Se:SR 18:402,12-14)² and the Khmer edition. This is sufficient evidence for reconstructing the full reading. This omission is usually attributed to “transmission error,” which means either the copyist’s omission or the editor’s oversight.

1.3 SUTTA SIGNIFICANCE

1.3.1 “Even as I’m sitting right here, and you’re sitting right there” [§6]

1.3.1.1 The headman Bhadraka asks the Buddha: “ ... teach me about **the arising and the passing away of suffering**” [§3]. The Buddha replies that if he were to answer theoretically, this *was* how suffering arose and passed away in the past [§4], and this *will be* how it will arise and pass away in the future [§5], Bhadraka will doubt this, since he has no way of verifying them.

The Buddha then, using an amazingly mundane **analogy**, declares to Bhadraka: “ ... even as I’m sitting right here, and you’re sitting right there,” he will answer him. Yet, the meaning of this simple analogy seems to have eluded every modern translator so far. To be fair, this simple-worded analogy is profound in significance. It is possible to tease out at least 2 or 3 meanings from it.

1.3.1.2 The most obvious sense of **the “sitting” analogy** [1.3.1.1] is clearly that the Buddha is referring to a pragmatic teaching, something that is evident like Bhadraka himself sitting before the Buddha listening to him. In other words, the Buddha will give a teaching on suffering that is *pragmatic*, down to earth, at once apparent and applicable to daily life.

The 2nd meaning of the “sitting” analogy is the difference between the awakened (the Buddha) who fully understands the nature of suffering, and the unawakened (Bhadraka) who needs to learn the Dharma in a gradual way, according to his level of wisdom. In this case, the Buddha uses the well-known idea of “**desire and passion [lust]**” (*chanda,rāga*) that keeps us attached to near and dear ones; hence, we suffer when any misfortune befalls them.

The 3rd meaning of the “sitting” analogy points to the nature of samsara, where, with proper Dharma training, we understand how our sufferings arise, and so we can prevent, even stop, them. This is by overcoming desire and passion, that started them in the first place. Samsaric suffering arises through our own bad habits, unwholesome actions recycling themselves, gathering strength and growing in variety each time. When this vicious cycle is fully broken, nirvana arises. Nirvana is then evident just as we are able to see someone sitting before us.

In short, the Buddha is showing Bhadraka what is true and real here and now—just as you are reading this now. This prepares us for the truth regarding the universality of suffering that we will be examining next. The Buddha is teaching us about the **empirical** and **verifiable** truth [2.1.0].

¹ Sadly, this reconstruction is missing from the tr by Bodhi (S:B), who, curiously does not use the Siamese Tipiṭaka at all; hence, missing this vital Pali clue. See (1.2).

² This is the Royal Siamese (Syamraṭṭha) ed of the Tipiṭaka, vol 18, page 408, lines 12-14.

1.3.2 The kinds of suffering

1.3.2.1 The Commentary says that the Sutta presents the teaching of **samsaric suffering** (*vaṭṭa, dukkha*) (SA 3:108,13), that is, suffering arising from the vicissitudes of human life. A vicissitude is an uncertainty, change and becoming-other in our life and its circumstances; hence, they are always in the plural: *vicissitudes*. They are the changes we undergo, and the changes in others, too. Although all humans undergo similar vicissitudes, we are also painfully affected by the vicissitudes of those whom we love, care about and desire.

1.3.2.2 The Saṃyutta Commentary mentions **the Bandhana Sutta** (S 22.117) as another text whose theme is **samsaric suffering** (*vaṭṭa, dukkha*). The Sutta teaches that we should not “be bound by the bond” (*bandhana, baddho*) that is the 5 aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. (SA 2:333). We thus have a clue here that *vaṭṭa, dukkha* is closely associated with *the 5 aggregates*.

The 5 aggregates are, in fact, listed as the last of the 8 sufferings in the definition of *dukkha* in **the Dhamma, cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), the Buddha’s “1st sermon,” thus:

(1) birth	is suffering;	} physical suffering (<i>dukkha, dukkhatā</i>)
(2) decay	is suffering;	
(3) disease	is suffering;	
(4) death	is suffering;	
(5) to be with the unpleasant	is suffering;	} suffering due to change (<i>vipariṇāma, dukkhatā</i>)
(6) to be without the pleasant	is suffering;	
(7) not to get what one desires	is suffering,	
(8) in short, <u>the 5 aggregates of clinging</u>	are suffering.	— suffering due to formations (<i>saṅkhāra, dukkhatā</i>) (S 56.11,5) SD 1.1 ³

1.3.2.3 The 8 sufferings are grouped into **3 kinds of suffering**: physical suffering, mental suffering, and existential suffering. [1.3.2.2]

(1-4) **Physical suffering** (*dukkha, dukkhatā*) refers to the true nature of our body, our physical being. (1) we are born; hence, (2) we decay; sometimes this decay is clearly seen and felt as (3) disease; whatever is born must then (4) die. These are the “physical” symptoms of samsara (cyclic life).

(5-7) **Mental suffering** (*vipariṇāma, dukkhatā*) results from our emotions of (5) likings and (6) dislikings, and (7) our desires. What we like are rooted in *the past*; what we desire are projected into *the future*. But our ideas of the past are constructed through selective memory, distorted recall and personal biases. The future does not exist except in what we project, and when the time actually “comes” we are likely to change our mind or feel disappointed. This is the *mental* suffering on account of change and uncertainty.

(8) **Existential suffering** (*saṅkhāra, dukkha*). The phrase, “**in short**” (*saṅkhittena*) [above], means that the 5 aggregates encapsulate all the kinds of suffering mentioned. In conventional language, we can list out the first 7 sufferings, but in spiritual terms—according to true reality—there are only the 5 aggregates: *form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness*. They are, by nature, impermanent, unsatisfactory [suffering] and non-self (with no abiding essence).

³ On the 3 types of suffering, see SD 1.1 (6.1).

1.3.2.4 Note that *saṅkhāra* appears twice. First, as the 4th aggregate, where it is always in the plural: *saṅkhārā*, “formations.” Simply, this is our psychological state of constructing realities based on a dichotomous bias of *liking* (lust) and *disliking* (hate). When our experiences do not seem to fit into either of these categories, we simply *ignore* them, or we feel boredom or angst.

The *saṅkhāra* of *saṅkhāra,dukkha* is an adjective qualifying *dukkha*, “suffering.” Otherwise, it is also in the plural noun, *saṅkhārā*, since it is a term for the “manyness” (such as the 7 kinds of suffering mentioned) that plague our minds. Technically, this plural *saṅkhārā* refers to “everything” in our universe: this is not only the world “out there” (represented by aggregate of “form,” *rūpa*) but, more importantly, how we “sense” (feel, perceive, construct and are conscious of). This is also called “the all” (*sabba*) [2.1.11].

All these are “constructions”—the mind’s creating and the heart’s imagings—of a virtual world. In other words, we create our own image of the world and live in it. Since all images (like mirages) are only *virtually* real, they are not *true* reality. When we take this as being “truly real”—when we see what is impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self as being permanent, satisfactory or self⁴—we suffer the fruits of our wrong view.⁵

1.3.2.5 We have, in the “Sutta Summary,” noted the commentarial term “**samsaric suffering**” (*vaṭṭa,dukkha*) [1.1.2]. The Commentary notes that this phrase describes the type of teaching the Buddha gives to Bhadraka: that suffering is rooted in desire (*chanda,mūlaka*). Bhadraka’s sufferings arise from desire and passion for his son and wife. They form his world; hence, this is his samsaric suffering.

However, we also know that there are many who have children and wives, even a large family, but they are not attached to them; hence, such people seem not to be burdened with samsaric suffering. Yet, we also know that such people still suffer in other ways, that is, on account of their greed, hate and delusion. They suffer on account of their **defilements** (*kilesa*).

In fact, the Commentaries also speak of 2 kinds of sufferings: samsaric suffering (*vaṭṭa dukkha*) and suffering due to defilements (*kilesa dukkha*).⁶ However, on a deeper level, all unawakened beings have defilements. Beings either show their suffering or do not, but they are still suffering, all the same. For example, we may not show suffering “due to change,” but we still must undergo “physical” suffering; and all of us are somehow burdened with the suffering of “the 5 aggregates.” Broadly, this is the suffering due to mental defilements.

Anyway, **samsara** (the cycle of rebirths and redeaths) is characterized by samsaric suffering. We, the unawakened, will all go through the recurrent cycle of samsaric suffering (*vaṭṭa,dukkhe saṃsāressantī*, DA 1:49). Only when our craving (*taṇhā*) ends, the samsaric cycle ends, too (AA 3:74), that is, to say, the ending of samsaric suffering is nirvana (SA 2:313).

1.3.2.6 And here is a quick survey of the sequence in the list of the 3 sufferings. We have seen how “samsaric suffering” is really (in essence) a term for the 5 aggregates. In other words, it refers to all the other kinds of suffering: “samsaric suffering” refers to physical suffering, suffering due to change, and suffering due to the 5 aggregates. In fact, the Sutta Nipāta Commentary uses just this term: ***vaṭṭa.dukkha,dukkha.dukkha,saṅkhāra.dukkha,vipariṇāma.dukkha***⁷ (SnA 1:151).

⁴ See **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8.

⁵ Further see ***Saṅkhārā***, SD 17.6.

⁶ MA 3:31, 223, 5:83; SA 2:373; MAṬ:Be 2:432.

⁷ Note that the “.” (dot) refers to a compound, and the “,” to a compound within a compound (a complex compound); hence, we have *vaṭṭa.dukkha, dukkha.dukkha, saṅkhāra.dukkha, vipariṇāma.dukkha*. The last *dukkhā* is plural reflecting that it is a set of 4 terms for the kinds of suffering.

We can render this long compound (which seems to be found only in the SnA) as “samsaric suffering, that is to say: physical suffering, suffering due to the 5 aggregates, and suffering due to change.” Note that “suffering due to change” is listed last, whereas in sutta explanations, this comes second last, thus: physical suffering, suffering due to change, and suffering due to the 5 aggregates⁸ [1.3.2.3].

In keeping with **the oral tradition**, we have, for example, the compound, *atītānāgata, paccuppanna* [3.4.4], meaning “past, present and future,” having 3 syllables (*atīta*) + 4 syllables (*anāgata*) + 4 syllables (*paccuppanna*). In English, we normally would say, “past, present and future.” The rule of “waxing compounds” are amongst the rules and ways to facilitate the smooth, almost musical, way of reciting so that the texts are more easily remembered.

Hence, following the rule of “**waxing compounds**,” we have the compound, *vaṭṭa.dukkha, dukkha.-dukkha, saṅkhāra.dukkha, vipariṇāma.dukkhā* coded as [2.2 : 2.2 : 3.2 : 5.2]: the elements of a compound are arranged in ascending order according to the syllable length.⁹ This explains why *vipariṇāma, dukkha* (with the most syllables), “suffering due to change,” is put last. However, when translating or teaching, we would follow the sequence of the 3 sufferings as explained in the suttas, thus: physical suffering, suffering due to change, and suffering due to the 5 aggregates. [1.3.2.3]

1.3.3 Suffering as truths

1.3.3.1 In the **Bhadra Sutta** (S 42.11), the essence of the Buddha’s teaching to Bhadraka is “**the arising and passing away of suffering**” (*dukkhassa samudayañ ca atthaṅgamañ ca*). This is, in fact, the same kind of teaching that the Buddha declares to the elder Anurādha (S 22.86) and stated in **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22).¹⁰ This is a sutta teaching on the “rise and fall” of things: whatever has arisen must pass away. Not understanding this (the 1st truth) or not accepting it (the 2nd truth) brings suffering upon us.

This essential teaching summarizes the whole of the Buddha’s teaching. “The arising of suffering” (*dukkhassa samudaya*) is a shorthand (synecdoche) for the 1st and the 2nd noble truths: suffering and its arising. “The passing away of suffering” (*dukkhassa atthaṅgama*) is a shorthand for the 3rd and the 4th noble truths: the ending of suffering and the path leading to its ending.¹¹

1.3.3.2 The vital significance of this essential teaching of **the arising and passing away of suffering** is that it invites us to investigate the meaning and purpose of life in a fundamental, yet overarching, way. In early Buddhist terms, what is the meaning of “meaning”? It is the sense or message (*attha*) conveyed by the words (*vyañjana*). By penetrating the semantic meaning of the *text*, it is then easier for us to know **the spiritual sense of the teaching**, especially when we have personally experienced the same true reality.

Language is a human construct conditioned by time and space: hence, we speak of the text and its **context**: the word and its meaning, the teaching and its message—what does it all mean? Hence, we can imagine the teaching to be like a flag displayed on its mast. Only the wind blows (the direction from which it blows doesn’t matter here), the flag “flies” in the wind; then, we can better make sense of it. The flag, ironically, would not function so well if it just “flags.”

Hence, when studying the suttas, or listening to any good Dharma teacher, we should not only understand the words he has spoken (the propositional content or semantic meaning of the teaching or talk),

⁸ The cpd actually puts “suffering due to change” (*vupariṇāma, dukkha*) last. This odd arrangement is prob to facilitate easier memorization of such a long term, following the rule of “waxing components”: the elements of a compound are arranged in an ascending sequence according to length: see CPD 35*.

⁹ See CPD 35* (Epilegomena).

¹⁰ See **Anurādha S** (S 22.86), SD 21.13; **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22,38), SD 3.13; SD 40a.1 (11.1.1).

¹¹ See also SD 1.1 (4.0.2.7).

that is, the “text,” but we should also understand the special context or message of the teaching: its pragmatic meaning or “context.”

Hence, we need to ask, for example, “What is meant by suffering (*dukkha*) that the Buddha teaches?” and “Why is there suffering and why does the Buddha start his teaching there?” These are questions that help us better understand the 1st and the 2nd truths, respectively.¹²

1.3.3.3 Once we have understood **the meaning**—semantic and pragmatic, the medium and the message, text and context—then, we are in a better position to understand **the purpose** of the Buddha’s teaching, as embodied in the 3rd and the 4th truths. The 3rd noble truth, that is, nirvana, is the “goal” of our Dhamma practice and training, while the 4th truth is the “path,” that is the training or practice itself. This is the Dharma in theory.

The oldest version of the 4-noble-truth formula reverses the sequence of the last two truths: the 3rd truth is the path that leads to the 4th truth, nirvana: this is the natural “practice” model (the 1-2-4-3 sequence of truths). The more familiar truth-sequence (1-2-3-4) is that of the “teaching” model.¹³

2 Knowledge of suffering and its ending

2.1 EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE: EMPIRICAL TRUTH AND VERIFIABLE TRUTH

2.1.0 Experiential knowledge

2.1.0.0 The Bhadraka Sutta (S 42.11) presents the knowledge of “the arising and ending of suffering” as a universal truth: it *is* true in the present; hence, it *was* also true in the past, and *will be* true in the future, too. The Buddha begins his teaching by clarifying to Bhadraka what is meant by the evident or empirical: “**even as I’m sitting right here, and you’re sitting right there**” [§6].

The statement that “there are ... those on whose account sorrow, lamentation physical pain, mental pain, and despair would arise in me if they were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame” [§9], in answer to the Buddha’s question, is an **empirical** statement. This proposition is either directly verifiable by personal observation, or can be inferred from such observation by the use of inductive reasoning from observing a few people, or even a single person, and the principles deduced therefrom can then be applied to everyone: from the particular we see the universal truth.

Both of these methods work on deductive reasoning, that is, seeing how certain causes constantly bring certain effects. Thus, it is a fact that when we hold dear certain people, when misfortune befalls them, we would invariably suffer negative emotions. We know this from our own experience (empirical) and we can deduce this from the experience of others (inferential).

2.1.0.1 Based on this fundamental principle, the Buddha demonstrates (through Bhadraka) how we can see by our present experience that, *right here and now*, there are people (and animals that we love and care for) whose death or misfortunes *will* trouble us: we will suffer sadness, etc. So, too, there are those whose fortunes, here and now, we do *not* care at all about; hence, we are *not* really troubled by their misfortunes [§§8-10]. This is an empirical truth.

The Buddha then shows Bhadraka why there is such a universal state of affairs—that we suffer on account of others. Bhadraka himself answers that this is because of our “**desire and passion**” (*chanda*,-

¹² It also helps to understand the nature of **polysemy** of Pali words and usage: see SD 1.1 (4.4.5).

¹³ On the 4 truths in terms of meaning and purpose of life, see SD 1.1 (4.0.1). On the truth-sequences, see SD 1.1 (6.2.2.2).

rāga) for others. He is able to verify what the Buddha has stated by his own experience [§§11-12]. This is a verifiable truth.

There are 2 kinds of truth we need to note here:

- (1) we *do* know or *can* know that there are those who suffer misfortunes: this is an **empirical truth** [2.1.1];
- (2) we ourselves experience suffering in the misfortunes of those near and dear: this is a **verifiable truth** [2.1.2].

These are the 2 bases for experiential knowledge, the kind of sense-based knowing that occurs here and now, that is, which helps us to directly see into true reality. [2.1.1, 2.1.2]

2.1.0.2 Having established this verifiable and empirical truth—which is real and true knowledge—the Buddha shows Bhadraka that, based on this real truth of the present [2.1.0.1], we can thus “**draw a conclusion**” (*nayam neti*) that this very same truth also applies to the past as well as to the future. Hence, this is true *all the time*: it is a universal truth, both real and true: that suffering—*sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair* [§11]—is rooted in desire and passion [§13].

Bhadraka agrees [§§14-15], and goes on to endorse this truth by stating how his love (desire and passion) for his son, Cira,vāsī [§15] and his wife, Cira.vāsi,mātā [§18], similarly, brings him care and concern, that is, suffering: [§§16-20]. The Sutta teaching ends with the Buddha affirming: “Whatever **suffering** that arises, all that arises is **rooted in desire**, with *desire as its source*; for, desire is the root of suffering.” [§21]

2.1.1 Empirical truth

2.1.1.1 The Buddha begins his teaching to Bhadraka by affirming that, **firstly** [2.1.2.1], we *do* know or *can* know that there *are* those who suffer misfortunes: this is an **empirical truth**. This is the 1st basis for experiential knowledge, the direct seeing of true reality [2.1.0.1]. In a useful way, this is accepting what is really *out there*, and not imposing our own bias onto such reality: that everyone suffers misfortunes, but we only *suffer* when misfortune befalls those whom we love or lust after.

In this sense, Buddhism rejects **dogmas**, unverifiable beliefs and biases that are held up as universal truths, which is common in God-religions. A dogma also tends to be exclusivist: we are *right*, others wrong; even self-justifying: since *we* are right, others *must* be wrong. An empirical truth, on the other hand, even when it is painful or unprofitable, is true universally. Furthermore, the Buddha teaches that to accept such a truth helps us in seeing things “as they really are,” which, in turn, helps us understand deeper and higher truths of life: that such sufferings and predicaments *can* be ended, even if temporarily, and that we must learn *how* to do this. In essence, this is what **the 4 noble truths** are about.

Finally, it is important to remember that empirical knowledge and truth are strictly **sense-based**. In modern science, the senses are the 5 physical faculties. According to early Buddhism, however, the mind is also a sense in its own right. Hence, we can speak of the 6 senses or sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*). Indeed, according to the Buddha, all that we *can* know is through the 6 sense-bases, and **all** that there *is* to know are the 6 sense-objects. These are the “**all**”: there is *no* way of knowing and *nothing* to be known beyond the “all,” as stated in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), SD7.1.

2.1.1.2 However, apparently, not all Buddhist truths are empirical, at once evident from observing what is within us or without us, in self or in others or in nature generally. For example, the doctrines of **karma and rebirth** cannot be verified in the same way as suffering is verifiable in the way that the Buddha teaches Bhadraka.

Karma is traditionally seen as “consequential”: good begets good, bad begets bad. However, from our common experiences, we often see the bad prospering, while the good often seems to suffer, despite being good. Often enough, it seems that even when the bad does something *good*, it seems that it is really and only for one’s own benefit. In this sense, we can say that “good and bad” are our own making.

Moreover, this consequential view of karma tends to encourage a **selfish** attitude of accumulating “good karma” or “merits” (*puñña*) as if they were something that is measurable or transferable, as viewed by many traditional and ethnic Buddhists.

Such beliefs also devalue our present life—that we cannot be free from suffering nor gain good, *here and now*; that we can only do so in some future life, often with the help of some external agency, such as “blessings” or dispensations from monastics, priests or holy persons. This would then make such a Buddhism a religion (a system of beliefs), even *a sophisticated system of superstitions*.

2.1.1.3 Such worldly teachers even cunningly claim of wealth, thus: “You can’t take it with you, but you can send it on ahead!” Give your money and wealth to us religious people, and we will assure that you will get back even more in the future! This is religious conmanship, Tartuffism, preying on the greed and gullibility of the faithful.

Religious gurus who are desperate or cunning enough may take this further. When a thinking or intelligent devotee questions them: Is this what the Buddha taught? They may gingerly claim: Oh! It’s just a joke! To such questioners it may mean: All right, this is not meant to be taken seriously. The obsequious faithful, however, tend to take such words *literally*!

2.1.1.4 Coming back to the Buddha’s teaching: Can we verify the truth of karma and rebirth from **nature** itself? Perhaps, by discovering some natural law (*niyāma*), we better understand and accept the reality, or, at least, the probability, of karma and rebirth. Notice how **plants** grow from seeds (*bīja*) or some means of propagation (such as tissue and grafting). In this way, plants propagate themselves.

Such a truth comes under the “law of seeds” (*bīja,niyāma*), which is one of **the 5 natural laws** (*pañca,niyāma*) taught in early Buddhism.¹⁴ Interestingly, this argument works better when we accept this seemingly unsophisticated translation, instead of rendering it with more class, “scientifically,” as “genetics.” Such a translation not only brings on technical problems (eg, there was no such category in the Buddha’s time), and also severely limits the compass of the term to only biological states.

The point remains that humans, too, procreate through seeds (spermatozoa and ova), and it is also possible to “clone” humans by using human cells. By the law of seeds, then, we may conclude that humans not only propagates themselves via biological genes (synchronically), but that each human can perpetuate himself or herself through time (diachronically) via mental “genes,” the cognitive basis or support for **rebirth**, that is, the rebirth consciousness.¹⁵

2.1.1.5 It is difficult, even impossible, to defend the doctrine of **karma** by *empirical* means, just as it is untenable to believe in an abiding soul or almighty God. The best, perhaps only, way for the acceptance of the doctrine of karma is that of argument from utility—that it is useful and good to believe in such a doctrine rather than any God-idea. To support this argument, we may add that we would naturally feel *good*, whether we express it or not, *when others are kind to us in some way*.

Arguably, we also feel *good* when we show good to others, too. Some, however, may counter-argue and claim that they feel good by exacting revenge, which is “sweet,” or causing harm to the bad (how-

¹⁴ On the 5 natural laws (*pañca,niyāma*), see SD 5.6 (2).

¹⁵ In later Pali literature, this is called *paṭisandhi,citta* (rebirth-consciousness) or *bhav’āṅga* (life-continuum): SD 7.10 (3.2).

ever we define this) or that seeing bad people suffering is gratifying. Yet, such a negative state is always rooted in some kind of past pain or present unhappiness. Hence, it cannot be good universally.

In fact, early Buddhism generally favours **virtue ethics** over consequentialist ethics. Karma is not always good attracting the good, or bad spawning more bad. Karma is about *how we act*: the quality and frequency of our speech, action and thought. Early Buddhism defines karma as our thought, **the intention** (*cetanā* or *saṅkappa*), behind the act that defines its moral quality. A good thought generates good action (verbal and bodily); also, as a rule, one good thought leads to another. In other words, our habits become us. As we think, so we *were*, we *are*, we *will be*. This is also a kind of *evolutionary* idea of karma: we better ourselves through our actions (karma). By karma, we create what we are and where we are heading.¹⁶

2.1.2 Verifiable truth

2.1.2.1 Secondly [2.1.1.1], the Buddha begins his teaching to Bhadraka by affirming that we ourselves experience suffering on account of those whom we love and care for: this is **a verifiable truth**. This is the 2nd basis for experiential knowledge, the direct seeing of true reality [2.1.0.1].

To “**verify**” a statement, we must ascertain whether it is true or false. If the statement is true, then, it is said to be, in principle, verifiable. For the statement—*all suffering is rooted in desire* [§13]—is, in principle (in theory), verifiable: every person (excluding the insane and mentally incapacitated) would agree with this.

By desire we mean both good (love) and bad (lust), and the emotions in between, that moves us to act or speak, and to think moved by desire. When such a desire (want, wish, hope, etc) is thwarted or destroyed, we would suffer; or when the good that we desire for our near and dear ones are dashed, we suffer, too. We also need to add the proviso that all this is verifiable and true only in the unawakened. The awakened or arhats do not function in this manner since they are spiritually liberated.

2.1.2.2 One problem still remains. How do we verify the doctrines of **karma and rebirth**? Surely, we cannot monitor every action we have done, much less those of others, to see the good or bad that we have done bringing like fruits that we deserve. Even more difficult it is to verify rebirth: we must have died and then return alive to verify our afterlife, assuming this is any of the 31 planes of existence that early Buddhism speaks of.¹⁷

Early Buddhism employs a fascinating way of verifying karma and rebirth: by **superknowledge** (*vijjā* or *abhiññā*), namely, the first 2 of the 3 knowledges (*te, vijjā*) of an arhat (including the Buddha). The arhat’s 1st superknowledge is that of **rebirth**, that is, his own past lives; the 2nd that of **karma**, the knowledge of how beings are born, live and die according to their karma; the 3rd is the knowledge of awakening.¹⁸ [2.2.0.3]

The problem with **superknowledge** is that it is a *private* experience. Only the Buddha and the arhats have this knowledge. Everyone else, the unawakened, do not have such superknowledges. Of course, we have reports of people, especially the young who are apparently able to recall their past lives. They must undergo special tests for their claims to be verified; even then, such testimonies are the exception rather than the rule.

Here, again, we have to resort to **the argument by utility**, that such teachings are more helpful, and less harmful, than beliefs in a God-idea or abiding soul. Even then, not all Buddhists would agree, not in

¹⁶ See **Virtue ethics**, SD 11.18a.

¹⁷ On the 31 planes, see SD 1.7 App.

¹⁸ **Te, vijja S** (D 13): SD 1.8 (2.2.2); **Cūḷa Hatthi, padôpama S** (M 27,23-25) + SD 40.5.

the same way, how good or useful such beliefs are. Perhaps, we may find some usefulness in these doctrines when they work with virtue ethics. [2.1.1.4].

2.2 THE 4 WAYS OF KNOWING

2.2.0 Defining the 4 kinds of knowledge

2.2.0.1 The Bhadraka Sutta (S 42.11)—although a short and straightforward teaching on “the arising and passing away of suffering,” it contains sufficient depth to serve as a basis for the study of early Buddhist epistemology, how knowledge, especially liberating wisdom, arises. What kinds of knowledge are there according to the suttas and Commentaries?

The Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga** give this list of the 4 kinds of knowledge:¹⁹

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| (1) knowledge of states | <i>dhamma ñāṇa</i> | [2.2.1] |
| (2) inferential knowledge | <i>anvya ñāṇa</i> | [2.2.2] |
| (3) knowledge of limits | <i>pariya ñāṇa</i> | [2.2.3] |
| (4) conventional knowledge | <i>sammuti ñāṇa</i> | [2.2.4] |

These very same 4 knowledges are listed in **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34), where it is said that they “should be made to arise” (*uppādetabbā*), that is, we should cultivate them for our spiritual growth.²⁰

2.2.0.2 The Vibhaṅga says that other than the first 3 knowledges, all knowledges and wisdoms are “conventional knowledge” (*sammuti, ñāṇa*) (Vbh 330).²¹ This implies that the first 3 knowledges are *not* conventional or worldly knowledge, that they are the wisdom of the path. Or, they are the kind of wisdom (although called “knowledge”) that leads us to the path of awakening. This is clear from the “knowledge of states” (*dhamma, ñāṇa*), which is the direct knowledge of the path (SA 2:67). [2.2.1]

It should also be noted that, throughout the Tipiṭaka, there is *no* mention of “ultimate knowledge” (*param’attha, ñāṇa*) as opposed to “conventional knowledge” (*sammuti, ñāṇā*).²² The doctrine of the “two truths” (*dve sacca*), that is, “ultimate truth” (*param’attha sacca*)²³ and “conventional truth” (*sammuti sacca*), is only found in the Commentaries and later works.²⁴ The Vibhaṅga statement (Vbh 330) is probably the locus classicus, the canonical root, for the later doctrine of the 2 truths. [2.2.4.2]

2.2.0.3 In this connection, we should also note that **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34) lists the “3 knowledges” (*ñāṇa*) as being those of the past (*atīt’arṃsa, ñāṇa*), the future (*anāgat’arṃsa, ñāṇa*) and the present (*paccuppan’arṃsa ñāṇa*).²⁵ The Commentaries further explain that, in terms of the arhat’s “3 knowledges” (*te, vijjā*) [2.1.2.2], “the knowledge of the past” is the knowledge of past lives (*pubbe, nivāsa, ñāṇa*); “the knowledge of the present and the future” is the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance; and the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya*) refers to all of the virtues that are both (*lok-*

¹⁹ D 33,1.11(11)/3:226; Vbh 315. Defined at DA 3:1019 f.

²⁰ D 34,1.5(8)/3:277.

²¹ *Thapetvā dhamme ñāṇaṃ anvaye ñāṇaṃ paricce ñāṇaṃ avasesā paññā sammuti. ñāṇaṃ* (Vbh 330,4), qu at DA 3:1020,17, thus: *Thapetvā dhamme ñāṇaṃ thapetvā anvaye ñāṇaṃ thapetvā paricce ñāṇaṃ avasesaṃ sammuti. ñāṇaṃ*. See (2.2.4).

²² See Jayatilleke 1963:367 f (§621).

²³ **Patoda S** (A 4.113) has the word *parama, sacca*, with vl *paramattha, sacca*, where it simply means “the supreme truth” without any contrasting “conventional” truth (A 4.113/2:115,12 f).

²⁴ AA 1:95; KvuA 34. See Jayatilleke 1963:351 (§610)

²⁵ D 34,1.4(8)/3:275,19-21.

iya) as well as supramundane (*lok'uttara*): all these are collectively found in the omniscient one (the fully self-awakened Buddha).²⁶

2.2.1 Dhamma ñāṇa

2.2.1.1 Dhamma ñāṇa (knowledge of states) is defined in the **Vibhaṅga** as the (direct) knowledge of the path (*magga, ñāṇa*, SA 2:67), that is, the stages of noble sainthood. In other words, this is a special knowledge of the supramundane states, that is, the wisdom connected with the 4 paths and 4 fruits. The 4 paths (*magga*) are those of the “4 true persons”: the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats who have reached the path but are yet to be full-fledged. Their respective fruits (*phala*) are the arising of full-fledged noble saints.²⁷

The **Vibhaṅga** explains this term in some detail. Having fully understood **the 4 noble truths here and now**, they draw the conclusion (*ñāṇa neti*) that in *the past*, too, the practitioners come to realize these very same 4 noble truths in the same manner. In *the future*, too, practitioners will come to realize the same truths (Vbh 329,8-27). This way of knowing is technically known as “inferential knowledge” [2.2.2].

2.2.1.2 This means that these **4 pairs of persons** or **8 noble individuals** have all understood the 4 noble truths at their respective levels: the arhat being the one who has fully understood them. In the **Bhadrika Sutta** (S 42.11), the 4 noble truths are presented in its **2-truth formula**: “the arising and passing away of suffering” [§3 etc].

Hence, the Dīgha Commentary says: “The knowledge of states is the truth that is the cessation (of suffering) found within the 4 truths, with the realization of the 4 truths all at once. Further, the Vibhaṅga says: ‘Therein what is *dhamme ñāṇa*? The knowledge regarding the paths and the fruits.’ (Vbh 796/329)”²⁸

The meaning of this 2-truth formula has been more fully discussed elsewhere [1.3.3].

2.2.2 Anvaya ñāṇa

2.2.2.1 Anvaya ñāṇa (the “drift of Dharma” knowledge) is inferential knowledge (*anugamana, ñāṇa*), conclusive knowledge (*ñāṇa, ñāṇa*), reasoned knowledge (*kāraṇa, ñāṇa*) (VbhA 417,5). For our practical purposes, we can take these commentarial explanations of the terms as approximating, respectively, empirical²⁹ knowledge, inferential³⁰ knowledge and inductive³¹ knowledge. This is the knowledge by which an arhat knows that he is fully awakened, that is to say, by way of “**review knowledge**.”³² [2.2.2.3]

²⁶ *Ettāvatā ca pubbe, nivāsa, ñāṇena atī'amsa, ñāṇaṃ, dibba, cakkhunā paccuppannānāgat'amsa, ñāṇaṃ, āsava-k, khayena sakala, lokiya, lokuttara, guṇan'ti evaṃ tīhi vijjāhi sabbe'pi sabbaññu, guṇe saṅgahetvā ...* (MA 1:128; AA 4:90, 143; VA 1:169)

²⁷ On the 4 noble saints, see (**Catukka**) **Samaṇa S** (A 4.239), SD 49.14; SD 10.16 (11-14); on the 8 individuals, see **Aṭṭha Puggala S 2** (A 8.60) SD 15.10a(2).

²⁸ *Dhamme ñāṇan'ti eka, paṭivedha, vasena catu, sacca, dhamme ñāṇaṃ catu, sacc'abbhantare nirodha, sacce dhamme ñāṇaṃ ca. Yathāha “tattha katamaṃ dhamme ñāṇaṃ? Catūsu maggesu catūsu phalesu ñāṇan'ti* (Vbh 796/329) (DA 3:1019 f). On when one knows any of the 4 truths one knows them all, see **Gavampati S** (S 56.30), SD 53.1.

²⁹ “Empirical” means “based on experience, observation and perception,” ie, that which “follows” (*anugamana*) or is consequent to, resulting from our sense-experiences. See (2.1.1).

³⁰ *Nayana, ñāṇa* is lit, “knowledge by conclusion”; hence, inferential.

³¹ Technically, “inductive” means “characterized by the inference of general principles or laws from particular instances.” This inference works with our reasoning; hence, inductive. These philosophical terms have been used purely for convenience. It is wise not to be caught up with these terms as used in western philosophy.

³² *Anuaye ñāṇaṃ, dhamma, ñāṇass anugamane ñāṇe, paccavekkhaṇa, ñāṇass'etaṃ ñāṇaṃ* (SA 2:67).

“Inferential knowledge” (*anvaya ñāṇa*) is so closely related to the “knowledge of states” (*dhamma ñāṇa*) that **the Vibhaṅga** actually defines them together [2.2.1.1]. “The knowledge of states” is the present understanding of the “paths,” that is, the 4 stages of sainthood. With this understanding, one infers these states *were* such in the past, and *will be* so in the future: this is “inferential knowledge.”

2.2.2.2 The Dīgha Commentary defines inferential knowledge, thus:

“**Anvaye ñāṇa** means: Having seen the 4 truths by review knowledge, one then applies this by way of inferential knowledge to both the past and the future, thus: Just this is the truth that is suffering; just this is the truth of its arising, that is craving; just this is the truth that is its ending (nirvana); just this is the truth that is the path (the noble eightfold path).

Hence, it is said (in the Vibhaṅga): ‘Headman, by means of this truth that is seen, understood, immediately attained, immersed in, **one draws the conclusion** regarding the past and the future.’ [S 42.11,-13]³³ (DA 3:1020,3-9)

Thus, one directly understood (*abbhaññāmsu*) **the 4 noble truths here and now**. One then draws the conclusion (*nayam neti*) that in *the past*, too, practitioners came to realize these very same 4 noble truths in the same manner. In *the future*, too, practitioners will come to realize the same truths (Vbh 329,8-27). From our present knowledge of the 4 truths, we can, when we have reached the path, infer by review-knowledge that these truths *applied* in the past, too, and *will apply* in the future, too. This is inferential knowledge: it leads to wisdom.³⁴

2.2.2.3 Thus, the Buddha, after explaining to the headman Bhadraka how, in the present, we suffer on account of desire or passion for others, goes on to show that this applies to **the past and the future**, too, thus:

“Headman, by means of this truth [this dharma] that is seen, understood, immediately attained,³⁵ immersed in, **we draw a conclusion** (*nayam nehi*) regarding the past and the future.”³⁶ [§13].

Technically, this is “**inferential knowledge**” or understanding of the drift of the Dharma (*anvaya dhamma*), that is, review knowledge (especially of an arhat). After one becomes an arhat, one then examines how one’s mind has been liberated.³⁷ This is, of course, the highest spiritual attainment, according to early Buddhism.

2.2.2.4 In the Bhadraka Sutta (S 42.11), we see the Buddha implicitly using the streamwinning teaching [2.3] for Bhadraka, who is a layman. For a layman who inquires about “the arising and passing away of suffering,” suggests that his mind is concerned about the true nature of life: hence, he is likely to be ready to reach the path of the streamwinner.

Since Bhadraka is spiritually ready, the Buddha uses an idea that seems to contradict *all* that has been taught before that is time-based, that is, based on the present, the past and the future. Simply, put: **Time is suffering** [2.2.2.5]. The ironic silence of this truth must have rung a clear note of familiarity and

³³ *Anvaye ñāṇan’ti cattāri saccāni paccavekkhato disvā yathā idāni, evaṃ atīte’pi anāgate’pi ime’va pañca-k,-khandhā dukkha,saccam, ayam eva taṇhā samudaya,saccam, ayam eva nirodho nirodha,saccam, ayam eva maggo magga,saccan’ti evaṃ tassa ñāṇassa anugatiyaṃ ñāṇam. Ten’āha “so iminā dhammena ñāṭena diṭṭhena pattena viditena pariyoḡālhena atītānāgatena nayam netīti. [Vbh 796/329,10 f] (DA 3:1020,3-9). **Vibhaṅga** actually reads: *iminā tvaṃ gāmaṇi dhammena diṭṭhena viditena akālikena pattena pariyoḡālhena atītānāgate nayam nehi* [§13]. Vbh adds *ñāṭena*, omits *akālikena*, and puts *pattena* earlier before *viditena*. Otherwise, the two passages agree on the details.*

³⁴ The Vbh def here then closes with the Abhidhamma “wisdom pericope” [2.2.3.2].

³⁵ “Immediately attained,” *akālena pattena*. See (2.2.2.5; 2.3.1.3).

³⁶ *Iminā tvaṃ gāmaṇi dhammena diṭṭhena viditena akālikena pattena pariyoḡālhena atītānāgate nayam nehi*.

³⁷ See **Ñāṇa Vatthu S 1** (S 12.33,3-5), SD 85.11 [2.4], and Vbh 329; DA 3:1020.

truth in Bhadraka, since he immediately responds by agreeing with what the Buddha has taught him thus far, and corroborates it by relating how it is true about his suffering for his son, Cira,vāsī [§§14-17], and for his wife, too [§§18-20]. The Sutta then closes with the thesis statement: that suffering is rooted in desire. [§21]

2.2.2.5 While desire keeps us caught in time, seeing the true nature of desire, frees us from its slavish chores, its captive cycle of this and that: “this truth [this dharma] that is seen, understood, immediately attained (*akālena pattena*), immersed in” [§13]. The depth of this idea of timelessness is encapsulated in a single Pali word: *akālikena*, “that which has nothing to do with time.”

In the phrase, “immediately attained,” *akālena pattena*, *akāla* is polysemic: it is pregnant with multiple senses all of which may apply in the same context.³⁸ As a virtue of the Dharma, *ākālika* means “having nothing to do with time.”³⁹ Although this sense is inherent here, contextually, it has the sense of “taking no time,” that is, *immediately evident* (to the wise).

We thus see here how words often act as mere “headers” for a rich register of senses: although we have rendered *akālika* contextually as “immediately,” this is only as far as words (*vyañjana*) go, but the sense or meaning (*attha*) is much richer. It is the sutta teacher’s wisdom and skill to show how a single word like *akālika*, *akālena*, etc (grammatical forms of *akāla*) can embrace *all* of the Buddha Dharma!

2.2.2.6 The nature of time and spirituality is highlighted in **the Samiddhi Sutta** (S 1.20), where the young monk, Samiddhi, tells the forest deity who was trying to seduce him that the Buddha teaches, thus:

“Sense-pleasures are **time-consuming** (*kālika*), full of suffering, full of despair, and great is the danger therein, while the Dharma is visible right here, immediate [time-free].”⁴⁰

2.2.3 Pariya ñāṇa

2.2.3.1 The 2nd knowledge—“**the knowledge of limits**”—goes by a number of Pali variants:

<i>pariya ñāṇa</i>	D 3:83 f, 3:100
<i>pariye ñāṇa</i>	Vbh:Be 329; DA 3:1020
<i>paricce ñāṇa</i>	Vbh:Ee 329,28
<i>pariccheda,ñāṇa</i>	VbhA 417,7
<i>paricchede ñāṇa</i>	D 3:226,34

However, all these terms, despite their variant spellings, mean the same things: “The knowledge of the limits of the minds of others. Thus, it is said in **the Dīgha Commentary**: “Here, a monk [a meditator] understands, by (his own) mind, the limits of the minds of other individuals, other beings” [Vbh 796/329,-28-330,2], which should be referred to for details (in the Vibhaṅga).”⁴¹

2.2.3.2 The Vibhaṅga, in fact, defines it as the vicarious knowledge of the minds (“of other individuals, other beings,” *para,sattānaṃ para,puggalānaṃ*), which is the same as mind-contemplation (*cittā-nupassanā*), the 3rd of the 4 satipatthanas.⁴² It is defined in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) and elsewhere, thus:

³⁸ SD 1.1 (4.4.5); DEB sv.

³⁹ On *akālika* as a Dharma virtue, see SD 15.9 (2.3).

⁴⁰ S 1.20,5 + SD 21.4 (2.2; 3.1.5).

⁴¹ *Pariye ñāṇan’ti paresaṃ citta,paricchede ñāṇaṃ. Yathāha – “tatha katamaṃ pariye ñāṇaṃ? Idha bhikkhu para,sattānaṃ para,puggalānaṃ cetasā ceto paricca jānātīti* [Vbh 796/329,28-330,2] *vitthāretabbaṃ. (DA 3:1020).*

⁴² M 10,34/1:59 (SD 13.3).

Here, bhikshus, he understands with (his own) mind the minds of other individuals, thus:⁴³

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) he understands a lustful mind as | ‘Lustful mind,’ |
| or, he understands a lust-free mind as | ‘Lust-free mind.’ |
| (2) Or, he understands a hating mind as | ‘Hating mind,’ |
| or, he understands a hate-free mind as | ‘Hate-free mind.’ |
| (3) Or, he understands a deluded mind as | ‘Deluded mind,’ |
| or, he understands an undeluded mind as | ‘Undeluded mind.’ |
| (4) Or, he understands a narrowed [constricted] mind as | ‘Narrowed mind,’ ⁴⁴ |
| or, he understands a distracted mind as | ‘Distracted mind.’ ⁴⁵ |
| (5) Or, he understands a great [exalted] mind as | ‘Great mind [Exalted mind],’ ⁴⁶ |
| or, he understands a small mind [unexalted mind] as | ‘Small mind [Unexalted mind].’ |
| (6) Or, he understands a surpassable mind as | ‘Surpassable mind,’ |
| or, he understands an unsurpassable mind as | ‘Unsurpassable mind.’ ⁴⁷ |
| (7) Or, he understands a concentrated mind as | ‘Concentrated mind,’ |
| or, he understands an unconcentrated mind as | ‘Unconcentrated mind.’ |
| (8) Or, he understands a freed mind as | ‘Freed mind,’ |
| or, he understands an unfreed mind as | ‘Unfreed mind.’ |

(M 10,34), SD 13

The Vibhaṅga definition of the knowledge of limits continues, thus:

THE WISDOM PERICOPE. That which is wisdom (*paññā*), understanding (*pajānanā*), investigation (*vicaya*), research (*pavucaya*), dharma investigation (*dhmma.vicaya*), discernment (*sallakkhaṇā*), discrimination (*upalakkhaṇā*), differentiation (*paccupalakkhaṇā*), learning (*paṇḍiccaṃ*), proficiency (*kosalla*), subtlety (*nepuñña*), analysis (*vebhavyā*), mental analysis (*cintā, upaparikkhā*), breadth (*bhurī*), sagacity (*medhā*), guidance (*parināyikā*), insight (*vipassana*), full awareness (*sampajañña*), the goad (*patoda*), wisdom (*paññā*), the faculty of wisdom (*paññ’indriyaṃ*), the power of wisdom (*paññā, bala*), the sword of wisdom (*paññā, sattha*), the palace of wisdom (*paññā, pāsāda*), the light of wisdom (*paññā, āloka*), the radiance of wisdom (*paññā, obhāsa*), the torch of wisdom (*paññā, pajjota*), the jewel of wisdom (*paññā, ratana*), non-delusion (*amoha*), examination of states (*dhmma, vicaya*), right view (*sammā, diṭṭhi*).⁴⁸

(Vbh 329,29-330,2)

This last paragraph is a stock passage that also defines “full awareness” (*sampajāna*), which is another name for this practice (Vbh 250,24-32).

⁴³ *Idha bhikkhu para, sattānaṃ para, puggalānaṃ cetasā ceto parica pajānāti.* (Vbh 329,29 f).

⁴⁴ “Narrowed mind,” *saṅkhittaṃ cittaṃ*, ie “narrowed” or “compressed” due to sloth and torpor.

⁴⁵ “Distracted mind,” *vikkhittaṃ cittaṃ*, ie “distracted” by restlessness and worry.

⁴⁶ “Great mind” or “the mind grown great,” *maha-g, gataṃ cittaṃ*, ie made great or “exalted” because all the mental hindrances have been overcome, thus attaining a form dhyana or a formless attainment. See **Catuttha Jhāna Pañña S** (S 40.4) @ SD 24.14 (4). Properly speaking, only the first 4 form dhyanas are called *jhāna*, while the higher 4 formless bases are called *samāpatti* (attainment); and that the 4 formless attainments actually belong to the 4th form dhyana since they all possess the same two factors (ie equanimity and samadhi).

⁴⁷ Unsurpassable (*anuttaraṃ*) mind, prob syn with “great” mind. See D:W 592 n667 & Anālayo 2005 ad M 1:59.

⁴⁸ *Be Ee Yā tattha paññā pajānanā [vicayo pavicayo dhmma, vicayo] sallakkhaṇā [upalakkhaṇā] paccupalakkhaṇā paṇḍiccaṃ kosallaṃ nepuññaṃ vebhavyā cintā, upaparikkhā bhurī medhā parināyikā vipassanā sampajaññaṃ patoda paññā paññ’indriyaṃ paññā, balaṃ paññā, satthaṃ paññā, pāsādo paññā, āloko paññā, obhāso paññā pajjoto paññā, ratanaṃ amoho dhmma, vicayo sammā, diṭṭhi. Idaṃ vuccati paricce ñāṇaṃ.* (Vbh 329,28-330,2): [Omitted in Ce].

2.2.4 *Sammuti ñāṇa*

2.2.4.1 The 4th knowledge is “**conventional knowledge**,” given in Pali variously as *sammuti, ñāṇa*, *sammutiya ñāṇa* or *sammati ñāṇa*.⁴⁹ This knowledge is defined in **the Vibhaṅga** and **the Dīgha Commentary** quoting it, by way of exclusion, as “Other than the 3 knowledges—those of the (supramundane) states, of inference, of the limits of other’s minds—it is said to be **conventional knowledge**.”⁵⁰

The Vibhaṅga adds that “it is conventional knowledge because it is commonly believed to be knowledge.”⁵¹ In other words, it simply refers to “worldly knowledge”: a knowledge, at best, *about* things, without a full understanding of what it all means, and what we should do about it. However, our learning *starts* here—with conventional knowledge—we observe, for example how suffering arises for *everyone, everywhere, all the time in this world and universe*. This is especially true of us and for us. Then, we have started to “see, attain, know, immerse oneself in” that truth [2.3.3.3].

2.2.4.2 As we have already noted, there is no dichotomy of “conventional knowledge” (*sammuti, ñāṇa*) or “conventional truth” (*sammuti, sacca*) and “ultimate truth” (*param’attha, sacca*) [2.2.0.2]. This dichotomy arose only later in the commentaries, such as **the Kathā, vatthu Commentary** [2.2.4.2] and later works. **The Kathā, vatthu** itself, however, does not mention “ultimate knowledge or truth” (*param’attha ñāṇa; param’attha sacca*) at all.

The 2 truths are only mentioned in **its Commentary** (KvuA 84,5 f) in a polemical discussion to show the distinction between worldly knowledge and spiritual (liberating) knowledge. The Kathā, vatthu, in fact, only discusses a difference of views as to whether “conventional knowledge has only truth as its object and nothing else” (*sammuti, ñāṇaṃ sacc’ārammaṇaṃ ñeva na aññ’ārammaṇan’ti*, Kvu 1:310,32 f).

Scholars think that “[from the Commentary] this discourse [in the Kathā, vatthu] is to purge the incorrect tenet held by the Andhakas,⁵² that the word ‘truth’ is to be applied without any distinction being drawn between popular and philosophical truth”⁵³ (that is, between conventional truth and ultimate truth).

If we accept this, and it is relevant, then, it seems that there is no difference between the knowledge of medicine and medical requisites, and the 4 noble truths (Kvu 311). However, with this conventional knowledge alone, we will not be able to fully comprehend the 4 truths. Hence, we must conclude that this comprehension of the 4 truths comes only with “ultimate knowledge.” Indeed, both early Buddhism and later teachings agree on this point: that all the 4 truths alone define ultimate truth.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Sammuti, ñāṇa* (D 3:226,34; VbhA 417,17-20; KvuA 84); *sammutiya ñāṇa* (D:Be ad loc); *sammati ñāṇa* (Vbh 330,4). For a Kvu sectarian discussion on this knowledge (Kvu 310), see Jayatilleke 1963:367

⁵⁰ *Ṭhapetvā pana imāni tīṇi ñāṇāni avasesaṃ sammuti, ñāṇaṃ nāma. Yathāha – “tattha katamaṃ sammuti, ñāṇaṃ? Ṭhapetvā dhamme ñāṇaṃ ṭhapetvā anvaye ñāṇaṃ ṭhapetvā paricchede ñāṇaṃ avasesaṃ sammuti, ñāṇan’ti* [Vbh 796/330,3 f] (DA 3:1020,15-17).

⁵¹ *Ñāṇan’ti sammattatā sammuti, ñāṇaṃ nāma hoti* (VbhA 417,18 f).

⁵² *Andhaka*, “those from Andhra,” a collective term used in the introduction of KvuA to refer to the Rājagiriya, Siddhārthika, Pūrvaśaila and Aparāśaila (the first 2 mentioned in Dīpv; the last 2 belonged to the 18 pre-sectarian schools, about 200 years AB: PDB 1091 f), which seem to have been related to the Caitya or Caitaka school, a collateral line of the Mahāsaṅghika school, which itself flourished alongside early Mahāyāna, sharing similar ideas.

⁵³ Kvu:SF (1915) 180. Bareau 1955;92, 220. On the 2 truths, see also Kvu:SF 63 n2 & Ledi Sayadaw, JPTS 1914:129 & n: *paramattha*.

⁵⁴ See Jayatilleke 1963:367 f.

2.3 STREAMWINNING—REACHING THE PATH

2.3.1 The real truth

2.3.1.1 The Bhadraka Sutta (S 42.11) relates how the Buddha answers the headman Bhadraka’s question on “the arising and passing away of suffering” [§3]. The Buddha begins his answer by noting that right here and now in Uruvela, kappa, the market-town outside which they are, there are those who are suffering “**sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair**” on account of the misfortunes of their near and dear ones, and there are those who do *not* [§§9-10]. This **conventional knowledge** (*sammutti ñāṇa*), when understood *as it really is*, as a fact about common suffering is a statement of the 1st noble truth—there is **suffering**.

Then, the Buddha asks Bhadraka what is the reason for the suffering in those who are suffering. Bhadraka rightly replies that it is **desire and passion**. This is the 2nd noble truth—the arising of suffering, which is rooted in craving [§§11-12]. Theoretically, this seems to be *all* that the Buddha teaches Bhadraka. Yet, this understanding of the present state—this basic form of “**the knowledge of states**” (*dhamma ñāṇa*) [2.2.0.1]—is sufficient for Bhadraka to use to broaden and deepen his understanding of the truths.

2.3.1.2 The Buddha then teaches Bhadraka how to apply his knowledge of states to **infer**, to “draw a conclusion” (*nayam neti*), that this also holds true for the past and the future. Even in the past, there were those who suffered thus (“sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair”) on account of the misfortunes of their near and dear one. And in the future, too, this *will* occur. This is “**inferential knowledge**.” This broader understanding *universalizes* the truths of suffering and its arising: there is suffering; it arises rooted in craving (desire and passion).

In effect, this is *all* that the Buddha teaches Bhadraka, as recorded in the Bhadraka Sutta. Bhadraka very well understands and accepts these truths, from his experiences—that he, too, suffers on account of his desire and passion for his son, Ciravāsī [§§14-17], and for his wife [§§18-20]. This is “**the knowledge of limits**” (*pariya ñāṇa*): that his mind is “limited” or afflicted by suffering. The Buddha then concludes his teaching, which is confirmed by the very last line of the Sutta, where he declares:

“In this way, headman, it should be understood: ‘Whatever **suffering** that arises, all that arises **rooted in desire**, with *desire as its source*; for, desire is the root of suffering.’” [§21]

2.3.1.3 On closer examination of the Bhadraka Sutta, we will see that the Buddha actually goes beyond merely stating the 1st and the 2nd truths to Bhadraka. He does *indirectly, in essence*, allude to the 3rd truth (**nirvana**) and the 4th truth (**the path**). This highly significant allusion is found in the phrase: “Headman, by means of this truth [this dharma] that is **seen, understood, immediately attained, immersed in**, one draws the conclusion regarding the past and the future” [§13].

Especially significant is the phrase, “by means of this truth that is **seen, understood, immediately attained, immersed in**” (*iminā dhammena diṭṭhena viditena akālikena pattena pariyoḡāḥena*). Of the 4 highlighted terms, the first two—“seen, understood” (*diṭṭhena viditena*) refers to the attaining of **the path** (that is, the 3 trainings): training in moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom helps us “see and understand” the noble truths. The last three words (or two phrases)—“immediately attained, immersed in” (*akālikena pattend pariyoḡāḥena*)—refer to the attaining of **nirvana**, the 4th truth.

2.3.1.4 The phrase, “**by means of this truth that is seen, understood, immediately attained, immersed in**” [2.3.1.3] is an important line found in the *dhamma, cakkhu* pericope, describing the streamwinner’s attaining of the Dharma-eye. We see this important phrase, for example, in connection with the brahmin Pokkhara, sāti’s attaining of streamwinning, as reported in **the Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3), thus:

“ ... even so, in the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, while seated right there, there arose the dust-free stain-less Dharma-eye [vision of truth],⁵⁵ thus:

‘All that is of the nature of arising is of the nature of ending.’⁵⁶ (D 3)

This passage affirms that the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, Ambaṭṭha’s teacher, has attained **streamwinning**. The *vesāraja* pericope (on moral courage) then immediately follows. [2.3.1.5]

2.3.2 Moral courage

2.3.2.1 While the *dhamma,cakkhu* pericope declares the person’s attaining of the Dharma-eye, that is, streamwinning, the **vesāraja pericope** describes the quality of such an individual: moral courage. Here is the pericope describing the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, following his attaining of streamwinning. Note that the first 4 terms are also found in the Bhadraka Sutta) [2.3.1.4], thus:

THE VESĀRAJA PERICOPE.⁵⁷

Then, the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti, having seen the Dharma [the truth], ⁵⁸ having attained the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having immersed himself in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having abandoned uncertainty, having won moral courage [intrepidity], independent of others, in the Teacher’s teaching, ⁵⁹	<i>diṭṭha,dhamma patta,dhamma vidita,dhamma pariyogaḷha,dhamma tiṇṇa,vicikicchā vigata,kathaṅkatha vesāraja-p,patta apara,paccaya</i>
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said this to the Blessed One:
“Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante!
(The Dharma exultation and request for refuge-going follow.) (D 3,2.22/1:110), SD 21.3

2.3.2.2 The Udāna Commentary on the (Suppabuddha) Kuṭṭhi Sutta (U 5.3) explains the key terms of the *vesāraja* pericope as follows:

“Therein, *diṭṭha,dhammo* means one who has seen the Dharma, that is, by way of having seen the Dharma that is the noble truths. The other term (*dhammo*) here should be inferred in the same way (that is, as the noble truths). Thus, in this connection, the word *dhamma* is the same as *diṭṭha,dhamma*.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Evam eva pokkhara,sātissa brāhmaṇassa tasmim̐ yeva āsane virajaṃ vīta,malaṃ dhamma,cakkhuṃ udapādi.* Comy says that the “Dharma-eye” (*dhamma,cakkhu*) is the path of stream-winning: in **Brahmāyu S** (M 91,36/ 2:-145), it refers to the 3 paths (*tiṇṇaṃ maggānaṃ*), ie culminating in non-returning; in **Cūḷa Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 147,9/ 3:280), the destruction of influxes (*āsava-k,khaya*). The following sentence: “All that is subject to arising is subject to ending,” shows the mode in which the path arises. The path takes ending (nirvana) as its object, but its function is to penetrate all conditioned states as being subject to arising and ending. (MA 3:92)

⁵⁶ D 3,2.21/1:110,14 f), SD 21.3.

⁵⁷ See **Vesāraja S** (S 4.8) + SD 51.19 (3.3).

⁵⁸ “The Dharma [the truth]” (*dhamma*) here refers to the 4 noble truths. Having seen the truth for himself, he cuts off the fetter of doubt and now has “the noble and liberating view that accordingly leads the practitioner to the complete destruction of suffering” (*yā’yaṃ diṭṭhi ariyā niyyānikā niyyāti tak,karassa sammā,dukkha-k,khayāya*, **Kosambiya S**, M 48,7/1:322), SD 64.1

⁵⁹ “Having seen the Dharma ... in the Teacher’s teaching,” *diṭṭha,dhammo patta,dhammo vidita,dhammo pariyogaḷha,dhammo tiṇṇa,vicikiccho vigata,kathaṃ,katho vesāraja-p,patto apara-p,paccayo satthu,sāsane*. As in the case of **Yasa’s father** (Mv 1.7.10/V 1:16), SD 11.2(7).

Since there is also what is called “seeing” (*dassana*) that is different from “knowledge and vision” (*ñāṇa,dassana*), as **patto,dhammo** (“one who has attained the Dharma”) is said with the aim of excluding this. Further, since there is known to exist, too, an attained state (*patta,dhamma*) that is different from knowledge-attainment (*ñāṇa,sampattito*), **vidita,dhammo** (“one who has known the Dharma”) is said with the aim of distinguishing it from that.⁶¹

Moreover, since this same state of being one who has known the Dharma can also arise fully in terms of dharmas (path-states), one is said to be **pariyogaḷha,dhammo** (“one who is totally immersed in the Dharma”) to show the fact that Dharma has been fully known; thus, that very same realization of the truths of his, as previously mentioned, has been explained.⁶²

For path-knowledge, as it fulfils the functions of full understanding and so on by way of a single realization, is also comprehensively spoken of as being totally immersed in that dharma to be fully understood, unlike other kinds of knowledge.

Hence, it is said: “He is ‘one who has seen the Dharma,’ since the Dharma, that is, the noble truths have been seen by him.” Hence, for that very same reason, he is said to be ‘one who has crossed over doubt’ (*tiṇṇa,vicikiccha*), and so on.”⁶³ (UA 285,17-30)

In simple terms, this commentarial jargon means: since one has “seen” (personally experienced) the Dharma (true reality), one is said to be **diṭṭha,dhammo**; through “knowing and seeing the Dharma” (understanding true reality) one is said to be **patta,dhammo**, who has attained Dharma; one has directly known this: hence, one is called **vidita,dhammo**. Such a one “completely immersed” in Dharma is **pariyogaḷha,dhamma**, that is, one’s whole being is Dharma, free of all self-conceptions, doubts, and running after what is outside.

2.3.3 The morally courageous

2.3.3.1 When one attains streamwinning, one is said, in simple terms, to “have seen the Dharma, attained it, known it, immersed oneself in it, crossed over doubt, won moral courage, independent of others, in the Teacher’s teaching” (*diṭṭha,dhammo patta,dhammo pariyo,gaḷha,dhammo tiṇṇa,vicikiccho vigata,kathaṅkatho vesāraja-p,patto apara-p,paccayo*)⁶⁴ [1]. “**Having won moral courage**” (*vesāraja-p,patta*) is unique in this set of qualities of a streamwinner by way of being the result of all the other qualities mentioned.

A streamwinner has **moral courage** in the sense that he has overcome self-centredness and narcissism (the *fear* of losing to others by thinking in terms of “I, me, mine”); he has overcome doubts (since he has fully well understood the Dhamma of change); and he is no more superstitious (he does not need to seek solace or security outside of himself, since he is *immersed* in the Dharma: he sees the Dharma *within* himself).

⁶⁰ *Tattha diṭṭha,dhammo’ti diṭṭho ariya,sacca,dhammo etenāti diṭṭha,dhammo. Sesa,padesu’pi es’eva nayo. Tattha “diṭṭhad,hammo’ti c’ettha sāmañña,vacano dhamma,saddo.* (UA 285,17 f)

⁶¹ *Dassanaṃ nāma ñāṇa,dassanato aññaṃ pi atthāti, taṃ nivattan’atthaṃ “patta,dhammo’ti vuttarṃ. Patta,-dhamme ca ñāṇa,sampattiyā añña’pi vijjati tato visesan’atthaṃ “vidita,dhammo’ti vuttarṃ.* (UA 285,21-23)

⁶² *Sā panāyaraṃ vidita,dhammatā dhammesu eka,desenāpi hotīti nippadesa,vasena taṃ dassetuṃ dassetuṃ “pariyogaḷha,dhammo’ti vuttarṃ. Ten’assa yathā,vutta,saccādhigamo yeva dīpito.* (UA 285,23-26)

⁶³ *Magga,ñāṇaṃ hi ekābhisamaya,vasena pariññādi,kiccaṃ sādhetarṃ nippadesena’pi ñeyya,dhammaṃ samantato ogāḷharṃ nāma hoti, na tad-añña,ñāṇarṃ. Tena vuttarṃ – “diṭṭho ariya,sacca,dhammo etenāti diṭṭha,dhammo’ti. Ten’ev’āha “tiṇṇa,vicikiccho”ti ādi.* (UA 285,26-30)

⁶⁴ D 2:41, 42, 43; V 1:12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 23, 181.

2.3.3.2 Besides the brahmin Pokkhara,sāti [2.3.3.1], the suttas and the Vinaya mention many other laymen as having gained **streamwinning**. Here is a list of the best known of the streamwinners mentioned in the suttas and the Vinaya:

Aññāsi Koṇḍañña (S 56.11)	Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S	Mv 1.6.32 (V 1:12)	SD 1.1
Yasa (later becomes arhat)	Yasa Pabajjā	Mv 1.7.3 (V 1:16)	SD 11.2(7)
Yasa's father	Yasa Pabbajjā	Mv 1.7.3 (V 1:16)	SD 11.2(7)
Yasa's mother and former wife	Paṭhama Te,vacikā Upāsikā	Mv 1.7.3 (V 1:16)	SD 11.2(8)
Yasa's 4 laymen friends	Catu Gihi,sahāyaka Pabbajjā	Mv 1.9.3 (V 1:19)	SD 11.2(9)
Yasa's 50 laymen friends	Paññāsa Gihi,sahāyaka Pabbajjā	Mv 1.10.4 (V 1:20)	SD 11.2(10)
King Bimbisāra	Vinaya Mahā,vagga	Mv 1.22.9 (V 1:37)	
Sāriputta (later becomes arhat)	Vinaya Mahā,vagga	Mv 1.23 f (V 1:39-44)	
Moggallāna (later becomes arhat)	Vinaya Mahā,vagga	Mv 1.23 f (V 1:39-44)	
Belatṭha Kaccāna (V 1:226).	Vinaya Mahā,vagga	Mv 6.26.9 (V 1:226)	
The brahmin Pokkhara,sāti	Ambaṭṭha Sutta	D 3/1:110	SD 21.3
The brahmin Kūṭadanta	Kūṭa,danta Sutta	D 5/1:148	SD 22.8
The householder Upāli	Upāli (Gaha,pati) Sutta	M 56/1:380	SD 27.1
The wanderer Dīgha,nakha	Dīgha,nakha Sutta	M 74/1:501	SD 16.1
The brahmin Brahmāyu	Brahm'āyu Sutta	M 91/2:145	SD 63.8
General Sīha	(Licchavī) Sīha Sutta	A 8.12/4:186	SD 71.5
Ugga, householder of Vesālī	(Vesālī) Ugga Sutta 1	A 8.21/4:210	SD 70.3
Ugga, householder of Hathi,gāma	(Hatthi,gāmaka) Ugga Sutta 2	A 8.22/4:217	SD 45.15
The leper Suppabuddha	(Suppabuddha) Kuṭṭhi Sutta	U 49	

2.3.3.3 The Bhadraka Sutta (S 42.11) is a testimony to what the Buddha teaches (the 4 truths) and what our task is: to understand at least *one* of these 4 truths. According to **the Gavampati Sutta** (S 56.30), when we understand any of the 4 truths, we will understand all of them.⁶⁵ It's like a net with 4 corners: when we pull any of the 4 corners, we will pull the whole net.

To understand any of the 4 truths, especially *the first*—the truth that is suffering—we can start, for example, by observing how **impermanence** work on us and those who are near and dear to us. The reflection on impermanence includes noticing how things change, how people change; how our fortunes are so uncertain—that we are all beset with *decay, disease and death*. This is a reflection on impermanence related to the 1st noble truth. [§8]

Bhadraka is also taught to reflect on the 2nd noble truth: on how **craving** (our love and passion for others) brings us suffering, especially when we become aware of their misfortunes: *their death, imprisonment, losses or blame* [§8]. He is then taught to use this perception to infer that this is truth all the time, whether in the past or in the future [§13]. Indeed, we can use this inferential knowledge (*anvaya ñāṇa*) [2.2.2] to reflect on how this is true, not only for us, but for everyone else, too.

Reflecting on *impermanence* in this manner, we will **see, attain, know and immerse** ourselves in the Dharma. We directly experience true reality and so personally see the Dharma. This is when the Dharma-eye arises in us and we become streamwinners. This can and should happen in this life itself. It starts by our aspiration to streamwinning here and now.

⁶⁵ **Gavampati S** (S 56.30), SD 53.1.

2.4 RELATED SUTTA

The spiritual knowledge that is succinctly stated in **the Bhadraka Sutta** (S 42.11) is given in greater technical detail in **the Ñāṇa,vaṭṭhu Sutta 1** (S 12.33),⁶⁶ which should also be studied following the former. It gives a list of the 44 “grounds for knowledge” (*ñāṇa,vaṭṭhu*), that is, the 11 links of dependent arising (minus “ignorance”)—*decay-and-death, birth, existence, clinging, craving, feeling, contact, the 6 sense-bases, name-and-form, consciousness, and formations*—being worked on in the framework of the 4 noble truths (the ground, its arising, its ending, and the path leading to its ending): thus totaling 44 grounds.⁶⁷

Each cycle of *a ground for knowledge* is a case of one’s knowledge of states (*dhamma ñāṇa*) [2.2.1], which is then applied—as inference knowledge (*anvaya ñāṇa*) [2.2.2] to the past and the future. When these knowledges are mastered, one attains streamwinning. (SD 85.11)

3 Persons

3.1 BHADRAKA

Apparently, Bhadraka, the headman of the prosperous market-town of Uruvela,kappa [§1] is mentioned only here in **the Bhadraka Sutta** (S 42.11). However, when he questions the Buddha about the arising and passing away of suffering, the Buddha gives a deceptively simple answer with profound implications regarding the early Buddhist theory of knowledge.

From the Sutta, we know that he has a son, probably an only son, **Cira,vāsī** [3.2], and **a wife** [§§18-20], both of whom he loves dearly. It is this love that the Buddha uses as the basis for his teaching on suffering as recorded in the Sutta.

3.2 CIRA,VĀSĪ

Cira,vāsī is the headman Bhadraka’s son, probably his only one. Hence, he loves him dearly, and all the more so, since he is “staying in a lodging abroad” (*bahi,āvasathe paṭivasati*) [§15]. The Commentary explains that the boy is dwelling abroad, learning some arts (*bahi nagare kiñci sippaṃ uggaṇhanto vasa-ti*, SA 3:108,11-13). It is possible that he is away in Takkasilā, which is famed for such training. His father, a headman, can easily afford to school him in such a prestigious residential ashram.

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Bhadraka Sutta

The Discourse to Bhadraka

S 42.11

The headman Bhadraka

1 At one time, the Blessed One was staying amongst **the Mallas**. There was a market-town of the Mallas named Uruvela,kappa.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ S 12.33/2:56-59 (SD 85.11).

⁶⁷ **Ñāṇa,vaṭṭhu S 2** (S 12.34) gives 77 objects of knowledge (7 x 11) (SD 85.12); def in detail at Vbh 306-344.

⁶⁸ *Ekam samayaṃ bhagavā malleṣu viharati, uruvela,kappaṃ nāma mallānaṃ nigamo*. This sentence does not actually tell where the Buddha is staying. A similar sentence structure is used in the opening of **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,1), SD 13.2, **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,1.1 n), SD 13.1; **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15,1), SD 5.17; see

2 Then, **the headman Bhadraka**⁶⁹ approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and sat down at one side.

3 Sitting at one side, the headman Bhadraka said to the Blessed One:

“It would be good, bhante, if the Blessed One would teach me about **the arising and the passing away of suffering.**”⁷⁰

4 “If I, headman, were to teach you about the arising and the passing away of suffering regarding *the past*, saying,

‘So it was in the past,’ doubt and uncertainty about that might arise in you.⁷¹

5 And if I, headman, were to teach you about the arising and the passing away of suffering regarding *the future*, saying,

‘So it will be in the future,’ doubt and uncertainty about that might arise in you.

THE ARISING AND PASSING AWAY OF SUFFERING

6 Instead, headman, even as I’m sitting right here, and you’re sitting right there,⁷² I will teach you about **the arising and the passing away of suffering.**⁷³

7 Listen well, pay close attention, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante,” the headman Bhadraka said to the Blessed One.

The verifiable truth

(1) SUFFERING ON ACCOUNT OF OTHERS

8 [4] The Blessed One said this:

“What do you think, headman? Are there any people in Uruvela,kappa on whose account **sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair**⁷⁴ would arise in you if they were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame⁷⁵?”

9 [5] “There are such people, bhante, *in Uruvela,kappa on whose account sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair would arise in me if they were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame.*”

(2) NOT SUFFERING ON ACCOUNT OF OTHERS

10 “But, headman, are there any people in Uruvela,kappa on whose account **[328] sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair** would not arise in you in such an event?”

esp SD 13.1 (1.3.1.2). The quaint opening sentence—*kammāsa,dhammaṃ nāma kurūnaṃ nigamo*—is to simply highlight that Uruvela,kappa is a crowded, prosperous market-town, and that the Buddha would not stay in such a place. However, he was nearby so that its people would benefit from the Dharma.

⁶⁹ On Bhadraka, see (3.1).

⁷⁰ *Sadhu me bhante bhagavā dukkhassa samudayā ca atthaṅgamañ ca desetūti.*

⁷¹ *Tatra te siyā kaṅkhā siyā vimati.* We need to verify how suffering *was* always true or *will* always be true by merely stating it. We can only know this from the present reality before us. The Buddha is preparing Bhadraka for an understanding that is founded in truth and experience rather than mere doctrinal truth.

⁷² The Buddha is clearly speaking figuratively, meaning that he is going to teach something experiential and verifiable, rather than the speculative or what needs some kind of superknowledge to ascertain. See (2).

⁷³ *Api cāhaṃ gāmaṇi idh’eva nisinno etth’eva te nisinnassa dukkhassa samudayañ ca atthaṅgamañ ca desessāmi,* See (1.3.1).

⁷⁴ Phrase in **bold**: *soka,parideva,dukkha,domanass’upāyāsā.*

⁷⁵ Underscored phrase: *vadhena vā bandhena vā jāniyā vā garahāya vā.*

10.2 “There are such people, bhante, in Uruvela,kappa on whose account sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair would not arise in me in such an event.”

Knowledge by experience

11 [6] “Now, headman, what is the cause, what is the reason, that, on account of some people in Uruvela,kappa, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair would arise in you when they suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame?

11.2 And, headman, what is the cause, what is the reason, that, on account of some people in Uruvela,kappa, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair would not arise in you when they suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame?”⁷⁶

12 “Bhante, those people in Uruvela,kappa, on account of whom sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair would arise in me when they suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame—they are those for whom I **have desire and passion [lust]**.⁷⁷

12.2 But, bhante, those people in Uruvela,kappa on account of whom sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair would not arise in me when they suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame—they are those for whom I **have no desire and passion.**”

Knowledge by inference

13 “Headman, by means of this truth [this dharma] that is seen, understood, immediately attained,⁷⁸ immersed in, **one draws the conclusion**⁷⁹ for the past and the future, thus:⁸⁰

13.2 ‘Whatever suffering that arose in **the past**, all that arose rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for, *desire is the root of suffering*.

13.3 Whatever suffering will arise in **the future**, all that will arise rooted in desire, with desire as its source; for, *desire is the root of suffering.*”

Bhadraka approves

14 “It is wonderful, bhante! It is amazing, bhante!
How well, bhante, this has been spoken by the Blessed One:⁸¹

14.2 ‘Whatever suffering arises, [329] **all that is rooted in desire**, has desire as its source; for, *desire* is the root of suffering.⁸²

14.3 Whatever suffering that arose in **the past**, **all that is rooted in desire**, has desire as its source; for, *desire* is the root of suffering.⁸³

⁷⁶ Be omits this second question, prob through transmission or copying error. It is found in the Ce Ee Se.

⁷⁷ “Desire and passion,” *chanda,rāga*.

⁷⁸ “Immediately attained,” *akālena pattena*. See (2.2.2.3).

⁷⁹ “Draw a conclusion,” *nayaṃ neti*. See (2.2.2.2).

⁸⁰ *Iminā tvaṃ gāmaṇi dhammena diṭṭhena viditena akālikena pattena pariyogā|hena atītānāgate nayaṃ nehi*. See (1.1.2).

⁸¹ Be *subhāsitaṃ c’idaṃ*; Ce Ee *subhāsitaṃ idaṃ*; Se *subhāsitañ c’idaṃ*.

⁸² *Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ uppajjamānaṃ uppajjati sabban taṃ chanda,mūlakam chanda,nidānaṃ chandi hi mūlaṃ dukkhassāti*. Note here that Bhadraka has paraphrased the Buddha’s specific statements on when and how suffering arises. In §17, the Buddha himself quotes this sentence made by Bhadraka, making the generalization himself. This is, in fact, the **sutta thesis**, the essence of the Sutta teaching, which, significantly, closes the Sutta, too [§21]. See (1.3.1).

14.4 Whatever suffering that will arise in **the future, all that is rooted in desire**, has desire as its source; for, *desire* is the root of suffering.⁸⁴

The boy Cira,vāsī

15 [7] Bhante, I have a **boy named Cira,vāsī**, who stays in a lodging abroad.⁸⁵

Bhante, I rise early and send a man, saying,

‘Go, man, and find out how the boy Cira,vāsī is.’

15.2 Until that man returns, bhante, I am worried, thinking,⁸⁶

‘I hope my boy Cira,vāsī has not met with any affliction!’“

16 [8] “What do you think, headman? If the boy Cira,vāsī *were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame*, would *sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair* arise in you?”

16.2 “Bhante, if my boy Cira,vāsī *were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame*, even my life would be upset, so how could *sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair* not arise in me?”

17 “In this way, too, headman, it can be understood:

‘Whatever suffering arises, all that arises *rooted in desire, with desire as its source*; for, desire is the root of suffering.’

Cira,vāsī’s mother

18 [9] “What do you think, headman? Before you saw [met] **Cira,vāsī’s mother** or heard about her, did you have any desire, attachment or affection for her?”⁸⁷

“No, bhante.”

19 “Then, was it, headman, on account of seeing her or hearing about her that this *desire, attachment and affection* arose in you?”

“Yes, bhante.”

20 [10] “What do you think, headman? If Cira,vāsī’s mother *were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame*, would *sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair* arise in you?” [330]

20.2 “Bhante, if my Cira,vāsī’s mother *were to suffer death or imprisonment or losses or blame*, even my life would be upset, so how could *sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair* not arise in me?”

Suffering is rooted in desire

21 [11] “In this way, headman, it should be understood:⁸⁸

⁸³ Yaṅkiñci **atītam** addhānaṃ dukkhaṃ uppajjamānaṃ uppajji sabban taṃ chanda,mūlakaṃ chanda,nidānaṃ chando hi mūlaṃ dukkhassāti. Be Ee omit this sentence; found in Ce Se: see (1.3.2).

⁸⁴ Yaṅkiñci **anāgatam** addhānaṃ dukkhaṃ uppajjamānaṃ uppajjissati sabbantaṃ chanda,mūlakaṃ chanda,-nidānaṃ chando hi mūlaṃ dukkhassāti. Be Ee Ce omit this sentence. Found only in Ke Se: see (1.3.2).

⁸⁵ Atthi me bhanye cira,vāsī nāma kumāro bahi,āvasathe paṭivasati. See (3.2).

⁸⁶ This and foll lines: Yāvakīvañ ca bhante so puriso nāgacchati, tassa me hot’eva aññathattarṃ “mā h’eva cra,vā-sissa kumārassa kiñci ābādhayethāti. Be ābādhayitthāti; Be:Ka Ce Ke Ee Sa ābādhayethāti.

⁸⁷ Taṃ kiṃ maññasi gāmaṇi yadā te ciravāsissa mātā* adiṭṭhā āsi assutā, ahosi ciravāsissa mātuyā chando vā rāgo vā pemaṃ vā’ti. Be Se ciravāsī,mātā; Ce Ee ciravāsissa mātā.

‘Whatever **suffering** that arises, all that arises **rooted in desire**, with desire as its source; for, desire is the root of suffering.’”

— evaṃ —

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⁸⁸ *Iminā’pi kho etaṃ gāmaṇi pariyāyena veditabbarāṃ.* With this *pariyāya* phrase, the Buddha affirms Bhadraka’s understanding as in accordance with the teaching he has taught—that Bhadraka has properly understood the teaching. On *pariyāyena*, see ***Pariyāya nippariyāya***, SD 68.2.